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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Foreign Ministers of five permanent members of Security Council pledge to make preventive diplomacy a top priority and to work for reinforcement of United Nations role in peace-making and peace-keeping.

◆ General Assembly ends first week of annual debate hearing address by President of Cyprus, and statements by Foreign Ministers of Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia. President of Guatemala and Foreign Ministers of Ireland, Iraq, Indonesia, Greece and Gabon also address Assembly.

◆ Legal Committee hears differing views on new economic order and takes up trade law questions.

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The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council, today met with Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar at a luncheon given by the Secretary-General. Following the meeting, they issued a joint statement pledging, among other things, to make preventive diplomacy a top priority and to work to reinforce the Organization's role in peace-keeping and peace-making.

In the statement, the five Foreign Ministers -- Qian Qichen of China, Roland Dumas of France, Boris D. Pankin of the Soviet Union, Douglas Hurd of the United Kingdom and James A. Baker III of the United States -- reaffirmed that a revitalized United Nations had a central and increasingly important part to play in international affairs, in keeping with the United Nations Charter and in creating a new international order. They said they had reviewed with the Secretary-General the role of the Security Council in the restoration of Kuwait's independence and sovereignty, and agreed that the Council could be effective in upholding international law when it remained firm in its resolve.

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On Iraq, the Ministers found the "persistent Iraqi non-compliance with resolution 687 (1991)", and other relevant Council resolutions, "unacceptable" and reaffirmed their determination to secure Iraq's full compliance in order to restore peace and security to the area.

The Ministers also welcomed the efforts towards a Middle East peace conference, and expressed deep concern over the situation in Yugoslavia and its regional repercussions. On the latter, they also welcomed the unanimous adoption of Wednesday's Security Council resolution 713 (1991).

They also welcomed the progress made in recent months towards a settlement of the Cambodian conflict as well as the signing, on 25 September, of the New York Agreement by representatives of the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional.

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The General Assembly ended today the first week of main debate during which it has heard statements by Presidents, Heads of State and Foreign Ministers representing more than 50 States.

Opening this morning's Assembly debate, the President of Cyprus, George Vassiliou, said Turkish forces continued to occupy nearly 37 per cent of Cyprus, thus dividing the country in two and creating the present status quo. He said that 200,000 people -- one third of the population -- were uprooted from their ancestral homes; over 1,600 missing persons were still unaccounted for and around 70,000 illegal Turkish settlers had been brought over to the occupied area to alter the demographic character of the island.

President Vassiliou emphasized that a solution of the Cyprus problem which would allow the two communities to live and work together in peace and security in a unified federal Cyprus, would benefit all parties and promote security in the Mediterranean and in Europe.

In his statement to the General Assembly, Gianni De Michelis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, noted that the involvement of the Security Council and the Secretary-General in the management of the Yugoslav crisis was in itself a sign of the new times and of the need for a dynamic interpretation of the role of the United Nations in situations which departed from the classical pattern of inter-State conflicts. The adoption of resolution 713 (1991) by the Security Council reflected, in his opinion, the broad international consensus that exists on the need to try all possible means of containing the crisis in Yugoslavia and encouraging the search for political means of settling it.

He further noted that the right to intervene for humanitarian ends and the protection of human rights was gaining ground. This type of intervention, he said, had become an idée-force, and the most truly innovative concept of the remaining decade of this century.

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The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Alois Mock, stated that his country deeply deplored the bloodshed, human suffering and destruction caused by the fighting in Yugoslavia, especially in Slovenia and Croatia where the peoples had pronounced themselves in a democratic vote in favour of independence. Austria demanded that the escalating spiral of violence which already had reached Bosnia-Herzegovina be stopped without further delay.

Mr. Mock noted that the future coexistence of the peoples of Yugoslavia would have to be based on the right to self-determination and a renunciation of all change of frontiers by force between the Yugoslav republics, as well as binding agreements on the protection of all minorities and their equal participation in the political process.

In his statement to the Assembly, the Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, Budimir Loncar, addressed the current crisis in his country saying that Yugoslavia had become a matter of concern for many international fora and for its friends world-wide. Today's Yugoslavia was a great threat to itself and thus a threat to a larger area.

Mr. Loncar summarized Wednesday's Council resolution which expressed support for the efforts undertaken by the European Community and appealed to all parties in Yugoslavia to settle their disputes peacefully and through negotiations. The Council had also decided that all States should impose immediately an embargo on weapons deliveries to Yugoslavia.

After all that had happened, Mr. Loncar said, it was obvious that Yugoslavia should be redefined. It was necessary that a formula be found which recognized both the legitimate national aspirations and contemporary needs for an integration on a new basis. He believed that there was hope for such an outcome. Though still fragile, the breakthrough made a couple of days ago, through the agreement on the implementation of the cease-fire, was an encouraging step forward, he said.

Opening this afternoon's debate, the President of Guatemala, Jorge Serrano Elias, said that efforts were under way to put an end to 30 years of internal conflict in his country. He explained that his initiative, put forward three months after taking office, contained four main points: the enhancement of respect of the human rights of every Guatemalan; greater socio-economic equity; a strengthening of the rule of law; and the consolidation of the democratic process.

Speaking this afternoon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Gerard Collins, addressed the situation in Northern Ireland saying it was his Government's aim to build on what unites both traditions in Ireland and on the shared interest of the British and Irish peoples to bring peace and reconciliation.

During the past year, tentative steps were taken towards getting a dialogue under way, and last March the two Governments and the elected leaders of democratic parties in Northern Ireland agreed on a set of negotiating

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structures appropriate to their relationships. Mr. Collins emphasized that there were indeed factors at work for progress and he urged that whatever fragile progress was made in recent months should be preserved.

The Foreign Minister for Iraq, Ahmed Hussein, reiterated the necessity of implementing the provisions of the United Nations Charter equitably and without discrimination. Speaking extensively on the Gulf war and its aftermath, he said, "the fact remains that America is responsible above all others for the suffering of the Iraqi people".

The continuation of the inhuman embargo against Iraq and its people in spite of the Iraqi acceptance of all Security Council resolutions, he said, was "a flagrant exploitation of the suffering of the Iraqi people for purely political aims".

He called the continued economic embargo a violation of human rights, saying as a result, "more than 18 million Iraqis are being deprived of their food and medicine and consequently exposed to starvation and deadly epidemics".

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Ali Alatas, expressed to the Assembly his country's satisfaction that efforts to bring an end to the Cambodian tragedy had now reached its final stages. He said that since last September, the pace of the peace process had picked up dramatically, resulting in a number of decisive breakthroughs. Although some delicate work in tying up loose ends still remained, it could be said that "at last we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and this time it is not the light of an on-rushing train".

In his statement to the Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Adonis Samaras, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the endeavours of the Council of European Communities towards European integration. He assured delegates that the Europe his country envisaged will not only constitute the cornerstone for democracy, stability and peace, it will also be "upfront in the fight against terrorism and drugs", an area his country had been giving the utmost importance.

Pledging his Government's support for "every effort the United Nations is called upon to make for the promotion of democracy and human rights throughout the world", Mr. Samaras told the Assembly that Greece takes special pride in witnessing the flowering of democracy throughout the world, and this fall will begin to celebrate the birth of democracy there some 2,500 years ago.

Pascaline Merri Bongo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, stated that only a vast overhaul of international economic relations, which would take into consideration the interests of the North and the South, could lead to the overall economic improvement of African countries. One of the main hurdles to the continent's development, she said, was the African debt, today exceeding $270 billion. This problem, which affects adversely the economy of most African countries, should be tackled, in her opinion, within a regional context.

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The Sixth Committee (Legal) yesterday concluded its discussion of the progress towards a new international economical order and took up the report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Some speakers expressed the view that the economic disparities between North and South had increased since the mid-1970s when the topic of the new international economic order was first discussed at the United Nations. Others noted that the topic had produced some of the most contentious disagreements in the history of the Organization.

The Chairman of UNCITRAL, Kazuaki Sono, introduced the Commission's report, citing progress made on a draft model law on international credit transfers, procurement, guarantees and stand-by letters of credit, as well as of international counter-trade and legal aspects of electronic data interchange.

Speakers participating in the following debate urged that work on the draft model law be completed at the next UNCITRAL session. Representatives from developing countries noted that for many countries, high-speed credit transfers were not the norm; rules were still needed to manage credit transfers via existing technologies.

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